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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Education Commissioner Announces that 40 Schools Must Offer Choice 21 Schools Met Academic Goals and Avoid Sanctions**

PROVIDENCE – Education Commissioner Peter McWalters announced this morning that 40 Rhode Island public schools must offer school choice at the beginning of the coming school year.

The schools, from 7 school districts plus one state-operated school, must notify parents that the school has been identified as a “school in need of improvement.” Parents will have the right to transfer their children to another school within the district, under plans to be developed by each district.

The determinations were based on a preliminary review by the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the results of the state tests administered last spring.

Last year, 24 schools in the state had to offer school choice.

Under federal law, the state has to notify schools that may have to offer school choice before the start of the school year. RIDE staff reviewed test results from all of the schools that might have had to offer school choice for the first time, plus all the schools that offered choice last year – a total of 61 schools.

Of the 61 schools reviewed, 28 met their academic goals for the 2003-04 school year.

Some of these schools, however, still have to offer choice this year. Under federal law, schools must improve for two years in a row before they are relieved of the obligation to offer school choice.

“The results released today show a lot of improvement for many of our urban schools,” Commissioner McWalters said. “The schools that are on task are hitting their targets, and once they’re doing that they’re clear of the sanctions. That’s good news for Rhode Island educators.”

All schools must hit annual targets, in both English language arts and mathematics, for the school as a whole and for various groups of students within the school (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White students; students in poverty, students with limited English, and students with disabilities). They also must hit targets on either attendance rates or, for high schools, graduation rates. Schools that miss targets are classified as “in need of improvement.”

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates that schools receiving Title I funds for high-poverty schools must offer school choice if they miss targets for two years in a row. There are about 150 Title I schools in Rhode Island.

If schools miss their targets for three years in a row, they must offer free tutoring (supplementary educational services) as well as school choice. After four years, they face “corrective action” and after five years they face “restructuring.”

The information released today concerns *only* Title I schools. A complete list of the classifications of all schools will be released in the fall.

Here is a breakdown of the sanctions Rhode Island schools face under NCLB:

Sanction	2003-04	2004-05
School Choice	12 schools	20 schools
Tutoring	11 schools	13 schools
Corrective Action	1 school	6 schools
Restructuring	None	1 school

(Note that each school is counted only once on this list, though the sanctions apply cumulatively. That is, schools in corrective action must also offer tutoring and choice, for example.)

Two schools that offered choice last year have improved for two years in a row and are clear of NCLB sanctions: the Oakland Beach School, in Warwick, and the Social Street School, in Woonsocket.

18 schools will be offering school choice for the first time.

A complete list of the schools identified today is attached.

For a complete list of the schools that were reviewed by RIDE, noting which must offer school choice and which face no sanctions, see the RIDE Web site, [www.rido.net](http://www.rido.net). There you will also have access to the RIDE brochure on the state’s accountability system.

